

Fibre and the Gluten-Free Diet

For Adults and Children Over 1 Year

What is dietary fibre?

Dietary fibre is the part of plant foods that our bodies can't fully digest and absorb. Fibre has many benefits and is needed for good health.

There are 2 main types of fibre: soluble and insoluble.

Soluble fibre is a soft fibre that dissolves in water to form a gel. It helps to prevent constipation, lower cholesterol, and control blood sugars.

Sources of soluble fibre include:

- flax seeds, ground
- fruits such as pears, oranges, and grapefruits
- konjac noodles
- legumes* such as peas, beans, and lentils (*see page 2)
- oat bran, oatmeal
- (labelled "gluten-free")
- psyllium
- vegetables such as winter squash, beets, and Brussels sprouts

Insoluble fibre doesn't dissolve in water. It helps prevent constipation and keeps the digestive system healthy, which may lower the risk of developing certain types of cancers and heart disease.

Sources of insoluble fibre include:

- bran (corn, rice) labelled "gluten-free"
- nuts
- fruits such as blackberries, dried figs
- amaranth, millet, or quinoa
- vegetables such as potatoes with peel, corn, and peas



Children under 4 years:

Some foods can cause choking.

Foods like hard vegetables can be grated, cut into small pieces, or cooked to make them safe. Don't give foods such as whole nuts or seeds, popcorn, and dried fruit to children under 4 years.

How much fibre do I need?

When you are on a gluten-free diet, it may be hard to get enough fibre. You can increase the fibre in your diet by eating higher in fibre foods every day.

Age or group	Male (grams per day)	Female (grams per day)
1–3 years	19	19
4–8 years	25	25
9–13 years	31	26
14–18 years	38	26
19–50 years	38	25
51+ years	30	21
Pregnancy or Lactation	–	28–29

Gluten-free products are usually refined, lower in fibre, and may not be enriched – they may not have vitamins and minerals such as iron, thiamin, riboflavin, and folate added. Check the label and choose grain foods that are enriched when you can.

Tips to increase your fibre

Use the tips below to add more fibre to your favorite foods and meals.

Vegetables and fruits

- Choose vegetables or fruit at every meal and snack. Eat the skins or peels where possible.
- Add fresh fruit to cereal, yogurt, and baked goods.
- Use extra vegetables in casseroles or in soups and salads.
- Enjoy stir-fried vegetables.



Grain foods

- Eat whole grain gluten-free breads, cereals, crackers, pasta, and brown rice.
- Choose higher fibre gluten-free cereals.
- Add 1–2 Tbsp (15–30 mL) of gluten-free high fibre cereal, psyllium, or ground flax seed to yogurt, applesauce, puddings, salads, soups, casseroles, or ground meat products.
- Use higher fibre, whole grain gluten-free flours when cooking or baking at home.

Flour*	Grams of fibre per 1 cup (250 mL)
Coconut	43
Rice bran	26
Bean (black or white)	16
Amaranth	15
Almond	12
Chickpea	11
Oat bran (labelled “gluten-free”)	11
Nut flour (peanut)	10
Buckwheat	9
Cornmeal	9
Oat (labelled “gluten-free”)	9
Brown rice	8
Sorghum	8
Teff	6
Millet	4



Grains, pulses/legumes, and flours

*Naturally gluten-free grains, pulses/legumes, seeds, and flours made grains and pulses are **high risk for cross-contamination** with gluten-containing ingredients (like wheat, rye, or barley).

Choose items that have a “gluten-free” claim on the label.

For pulses without a “gluten-free” label, do a visual inspection for any foreign grains and remove these. Rinse well with water before cooking.

Protein foods

- Eat legumes such as peas, beans, and lentils often.
- Add kidney beans, chickpeas, and lentils to soups, casseroles, salads, and spaghetti sauce.
- Include small amounts of nuts, nut butters, and seeds (chia, flax) at meals and snacks.



What if I have constipation?

Try to get the fibre that you need from food.

Increase the fibre in your diet slowly to reduce gas and bloating.

- Eat regular meals and snacks to keep food moving through your bowel.
- Drink at least 9–12 cups (2.25–3 L) fluid such as water, milk, soup, coffee, or tea each day. Fibre holds fluid in your poop, which keeps poop soft.
- Get into a routine and give yourself enough time to poop.
- Keep active. Physical activity helps food digest and help you poop.

What about laxatives?

Laxatives are pills, liquids, and fibre supplements that can help when you are constipated.

- If you need to use a laxative, read the label carefully to make sure that it is gluten-free.
- Follow the directions on the package when you start using a fibre supplement and gradually increase the dose. Drink extra fluids when you take these supplements.
- It is best not to use laxatives regularly as your body may start to depend on them to poop. Compared to other laxatives, fibre supplements containing psyllium (such as Metamucil®), methylcellulose (such as plain Citrucel®), and partially hydrolyzed guar gum (such as Fibre 4® and Sunfiber®) are safer for long term use.
- See your healthcare team if constipation continues to be a problem, or if you notice a change in your poop.

Read food labels

You can use food labels when shopping to help you find foods that are higher in fibre.

The Nutrition Facts table shows the amount of fibre in each serving and the % Daily Value (% DV) for fibre. The higher the % DV, the more fibre there is in 1 serving.

% Daily Value:

5% or less is a little. 15% or more is a lot.

Learn more: [Gluten-Free Food Labelling Guide](#)

Nutrition Facts	
Serving size →	Per 1 serving
	Calories 80 % Daily Value*
	Fat 2.5 g 3 %
	Saturated 0 g
	+Trans 0 g
	Carbohydrate 23 g
Fibre →	Fibre 5 g 18 %
	Sugars 0 g 0 %
	Protein 6 g
	Cholesterol 0 mg
	Sodium 0 mg 0 %
	Potassium 193 mg 4 %
	Calcium 20 mg 2 %
	Iron 2 mg 10 %
% Daily Value reminder →	*5% or less is a little, 15% or more is a lot

Choose gluten-free foods with fibre

Include gluten-free foods that are higher in fibre at meals and snacks to help you get enough each day. Try to eat foods with fibre at each meal. Many gluten-free foods have fibre. See the below list for some **examples** of gluten-free foods with fibre.

Vegetables and fruits

- Apple, with skin
- Apricots
- Artichoke
- Avocado
- Banana
- Berries: blackberries, raspberries, blueberries, and strawberries
- Brussels sprouts
- Corn
- Citrus fruit: grapefruit and oranges
- Dried fruit: apricots, dates, figs, prunes
- Kiwi fruit
- Nectarines, peaches
- Papaya
- Parsnip
- Pear, with skin
- Peas
- Potato, with skin
- Rhubarb
- Sweet potato

Grain foods

- Amaranth
- Bread, whole grain gluten-free
- Buckwheat groats, cooked
- Millet
- Flours, labelled “gluten-free”: almond, amaranth, brown rice, bean, buckwheat, coconut, corn, millet, peanut, oat and oat bran, quinoa, rice bran, sorghum, soy, teff
- Oat bran (labelled “gluten-free”)
- Popcorn, air-popped
- Psyllium husks
- Quinoa
- Rice: brown, wild
- Teff

Protein foods

- Beans: black, kidney, Lima, navy, soy, white
- Chickpeas
- Edamame (green soybeans)
- Hummus
- Lentils
- Nuts: almonds, Brazil nuts, hazelnuts, macadamia, peanuts, pecans, pistachios, walnuts
- Peanut butter
- Seeds: chia, flax, pumpkin, sunflower, sesame
- Split peas

Sample gluten-free meals

Day 1

Day 2

Day 3

Breakfast

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|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Parfait made with Greek yogurt, banana, frozen blueberries, and topped with granola (labelled “gluten-free”)• Water | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Milk or fortified soy beverage• Omelet with spinach and tomatoes• Toast, gluten-free whole grain with grape jelly | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Creamy gluten-free hot cereal, brown sugar added• Frozen raspberries and cherries• Milk or fortified soy beverage |
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Lunch

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|--|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Tomato sauce, gluten-free• Black bean spaghetti• Chicken meatballs• Mixed vegetable salad with gluten-free Italian dressing | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Gluten-free bun, whole grain• Stew, made with gluten-free gravy, mixed vegetables | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Carrot sticks• Sandwich (gluten-free bread, chicken breast, cheese, lettuce, tomato, gluten-free mayonnaise) |
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Supper

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Beets and broccoli• Plum sauce• Millet pilaf, made with gluten-free broth, mixed vegetables• White fish, gluten-free breading | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Butternut squash• Green beans• Quinoa salad• Turkey breast, cranberry sauce | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vegetable stir-fry with chickpeas and lentils, gluten-free teriyaki sauce• Brown rice• Fruit, fresh |
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Drinks

- Water
- Coffee, tea, herbal tea
- Milk, fortified soy beverage

Snacks

- Almonds and carrot sticks
- Cottage cheese and fruit
- Fruit or vegetables
- Gluten-free crackers with hummus
- Gluten-free muffin or gluten-free granola bar
- Popcorn, rice cake, or gluten-free pretzels



Visit [Gluten-free Recipes \(celiac.ca\)](https://celiac.ca) for more meal and snack ideas.

Support



- Talk to your healthcare team.
- Call Health Link at 811 and ask to talk to a dietitian or complete a [self-referral form](#) on ahs.ca/811.
- Check out ahs.ca/Nutrition.